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By NARA Date 9/12/97

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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October 21, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

(B)

SUBJECT: Secretary's talks with Chinese Officials

KRM

Secretary Kissinger asked that I pass to you the following report of his talks with Chinese officials.

"I met with Vice Premier Teng and others for one and three quarters hours in the morning and two and one-half hours in the afternoon on Monday in the Great Hall of the People. My first day of substantive discussions with the Chinese was somewhat puzzling and ambivalent. They clearly welcome your visit but at the same time are extremely critical of our alleged strategic passivity towards the Soviet Union. As is customary, we spent almost the entire time on the international situation, most of it centering about our respective policies for dealing with Soviet hegemony. In the morning I gave a tour d'horizon, including an explanation of how we must combine flexibility with firmness versus Moscow in order to maintain public support for our foreign policy. In the afternoon Teng made a long presentation on the Soviet "Polar Bear" which was very similar to what he said last year with respect to Moscow's global aggressiveness, but much more critical of our policy in response. Whereas previously the Chinese suspected collusion between the superpowers, now they are charging us with appeasement in the face of growing Soviet power -- an indication that they consider us weaker than before. The analogy is to Western Europe's Munich policy of appeasement in the West and trying to drive the aggressor toward the East. I rebutted Teng's presentation at length, pointing out that we have resisted Soviet pressures whenever necessary while the Chinese do little more than dish out tough rhetoric while carping from the sidelines.

As usual, Teng invited me to open up the substantive discussions in the morning. I listed preparations for your trip, the international situation, and bilateral relations as the agenda for my visit. They readily agreed to every suggestion I made concerning your trip, in effect leaving its parameters up to us. Thus they accepted a visit from

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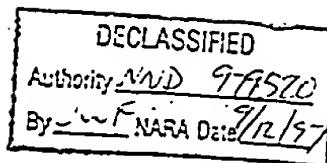
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*A.M.* Monday, December 1 to Saturday, December 6 with the size of the party, including press, more or less what we want. They also agreed to an advance technical team coming to China in early November. I said that you would be making no other stops in Asia because of the press of domestic business. Teng once again said you are welcome whether or not there is a meeting of the minds on various issues. I emphasized that it was in neither side's interest to have the impression created during your visit that our relations were cooling. He seemed to agree.

In my international review I gave a detailed rationale for our Soviet policy. I said that it did not matter if the initial Soviet pressures were in the East or the West. The strategic threat remained the same. On tactics I acknowledged our differences, but pointedly underlined that while we are more flexible than the Chinese, we actually take more firm actions in such areas as the Middle East, Angola, and Portugal while the Chinese confrontations are confined to rhetoric. I explained why we have to demonstrate to our public that all reasonable chances for peace are being explored if we are to resist when necessary, and then touched briefly on key areas. I pointed to the contradictory trends in Europe, with our strong relations with the major countries but difficulties on the southern flank. On the Middle East, I explained that the more even handed public attitude in America has increased the chances for a comprehensive settlement starting in 1977. And on Korea I said that we were not opposed to reunification but that South Korea had to be included in any discussions; and I warned against the use of force.

Finally, on bilateral relations, I reiterated our commitment to normalization and the principles of the Shanghai communique. I said that we would suggest some formulas in the draft communique for your visit which show some progress, though it is clearly understood that we cannot go all the way at this time. I emphasized the importance of showing some vitality in our bilateral relations in order to maintain public support for our China policy. I closed by saying that while we have different ideologies and policies towards certain countries we also have some common strategic interests.

Teng confined himself to a few pointed questions about our dealings with Moscow with respect to the grain deal, the sale of technology, and the Helsinki conference. I pointed out that the grain deal gives us greater leverage;



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our technology sales are limited; and that Helsinki was a minor event in which we gave away nothing while gaining some pressure points on Moscow. At the end of the meeting I gave them a draft communique for your visit which contains some forward movement on the question of hegemony and the normalization of relations, and extensive activity in our bilateral relations. I explained this was a maximum draft.

Comment: I expected them to whittle down substantially the bilateral agreements and to insert some unacceptable language on hegemony.

Teng led off the afternoon session with a very sharp and detailed criticism of our Soviet policy. It seems clear to me that Chairman Mao had directed the outline of his presentation. His main themes were that the "Polar Bear" is gaining strategically; that the U.S. and the West are demoralized; that we are wishfully appeasing Moscow while hoping its aggressive designs would center on China; and that China would rely on its own means to defend itself. He said that our tactics versus Moscow were so flexible that they betrayed a faulty strategic perception. He continually emphasized that the primary danger was to the West and not the East. He said that the Soviet Union had achieved nuclear parity while greatly outstripping the West in conventional forces. Moscow's only weak points were in agriculture and technology, and rather than pressuring it on its economy we were bailing it out with our commercial deals. He reiterated Chairman Mao's warning about Soviet designs and the need for us to work closely with Europe and Japan and to counter Soviet influence in such areas as the Middle East, South Asia and the Persian Gulf. He pointed to growing isolationism in our public opinion. He said that European visitors questioned the U.S. willingness to come to Europe's aid if Moscow attacked. He then drew a very sharp analogy to Chamberlain's appeasement policy at Munich which led to war. He cited the "European insecurity conference" as an example of pulling the wool over the eyes of public opinion and said that the danger of an historical tragedy like World War II is increasing. He closed by saying that Chairman Mao was urging everyone in the West to prepare themselves for conflict rather than relying on appeasing documents. As for China, it feared no one, asked favors from no one, and would prepare by digging tunnels, storing millet and rifles, and resisting hegemony.

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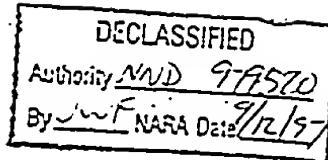
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I decided to make a lengthy, and sharp rebuttal to Teng's rather disturbing presentation. Since he made several positive references to Nixon's policy, I explained that your strategic approach was quite similar, and if anything a little tougher on the Soviet Union. In any event both presidents, I emphasized, had no illusions about Soviet intentions and had demonstrated a consistent willingness to resist pressures when necessary, while maintaining public support with the kind of flexible policy that was required for our public opinion in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate. I pointedly questioned the basis of our bilateral relations with Peking if it genuinely thought that we were appeasing Moscow or trying to push it toward the East. I said that I had listened to his remarks with some sadness since they suggested different strategic perceptions and not merely tactical divergences. Once again I reiterated that it made no difference whether an initial Soviet attack was in the East or West; the objective danger would be the same, and we would react out of our own self interest. I recalled the 1971 South Asian sub-continent crisis where we made some symbolic military moves in support of Pakistan while China did nothing. This was to remind Teng that while the Chinese were strong on rhetoric, we alone have been taking concrete actions vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. I also recalled the various times we had resisted Soviet pressure, such as in the Middle East, which belied the Munich analogy. As for Europe, we would be there in a crisis; the real problem was the possible demoralization of the Europeans. I made clear that it was the Europeans that were for the Helsinki conference and that we had to demonstrate a reasonable policy or the leftists in Europe would split us off from our allies.

I emphasized that the tough rhetorical posturing by some in our country was not a real policy, since such intransigence would lose all public support for a long term steady course of resistance. I said that you were pursuing the same strategy against Moscow as I had explained to Chairman Mao two years ago; that we would resist Moscow whether in the East or West; and that the tactics for doing so were our own business. I documented how we were maintaining a strong strategic nuclear position against Moscow. I urged Teng to give a pep talk on resisting hegemony to the Europeans who needed it and not to us. And I advised the Chinese that while they should highlight dangers, they should not attack us while doing little themselves, for that would only serve to discourage our public and spur isolationism. I concluded by saying that we attach



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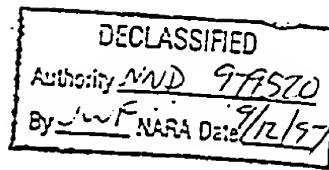
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great significance to our relations with Peking and were prepared to work in parallel with China. Our policies, however, must be based on mutual respect for each other's perceptions of their national interest. Each side had to take the other seriously. Your visit could be very useful to this end. The talks then adjourned until Tuesday.

Comment: We will see in the next couple of days whether my presentation has any impact on the Chinese perceptions. I felt there was a clear need to counter sharply the Chinese critique of our Soviet policy, which was referred to in the foreign minister's toast Sunday night and then starkly presented by the vice premier Monday in his Munich analogy.

I frankly doubt whether my explanations will make much headway for now. Teng is undoubtedly reflecting Mao's viewpoint; and only actions not words, will impress the Chinese. Peking's view has undoubtedly been shaped by the following factors: the demoralization in Europe and to a lesser extent in the U.S.; congressional hobbling of executive authority, including the Turkish aid cutoff, widespread investigations, etc; and the rhetoric posturing of some of the administration's critics on detente indeed by administration officials too. A significant factor is undoubtedly the Chinese belief that detente is in trouble in the U.S. They have shifted their theme from collusion to appeasement. This reflects our troubles at home. We were in our best shape with the Chinese in 1972-1973, precisely when detente was most active. The Chinese emphasis on the dangers of appeasement and war serve several purposes for them: They wish to rally the West; they probably are genuinely concerned about growing Soviet influence in the wake of Helsinki and Indochina; and they would love to push us into a confrontation with Moscow, if not to see the two superpowers weaken each other, then at least to ease the pressures on their own flank. Finally, there was increased emphasis on Chinese self-reliance, reflecting either suspicion of our motives, or of our capabilities, or both.

I do not wish to leave too gloomy an impression. The very Chinese concern about Moscow gives us leverage. After all, despite all the protestations about self reliance, they feel exposed and no one but the U.S. can help provide the balance. And then top leadership is spending three days nearly full time with us. So Teng's lecture can be seen as a pep talk as well as skepticism about our staying power. In any event they clearly look forward to your visit and know that it is not in their interest to jettison



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our bilateral relations. The major question remains, however, whether they understand the need to show concrete progress in our bilateral relations and to ease up on their attacks on us if we are to maintain our public support for our China policy so as to serve the strategic objectives of both our countries. I have reported today's talks at some length because I suspect they are a preview of some of the themes that you will be hearing in early December."